



Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme

Campaigning for the COMESA Green Pass for Livestock Commodities: How and Who?



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The availability of sufficient livestock commodities of the required quality is crucial for the success of the COMESA Green Pass in promoting trade within the region and beyond. This means convincing a wide range of stakeholders along the livestock value chain of the benefits of participation in the system, and convincing potential trading partners of the desirability of the commodities. Competitiveness in global and even regional and local markets is not a given – it must be achieved through awareness, commitment and innovation.

Who are the targets for the campaign?

The prime targets for a campaign to promote participation in the COMESA Green Pass system are value chains extending from the livestock producers, livestock processors, animal feed manufacturers, livestock commodity processors, and wholesale or retailer traders. All of these need to be

aware of the SPS measures required and the benefits of participation.

Livestock producers

Commercial livestock producers are likely to be willing participants in any initiative to increase their profits, but may need to be convinced that their participation will reap financial reward. Since they probably already have animals of sufficient quality and productivity, the focus will be on (1) confirming that the animals are free of trade-influencing unwanted diseases such as foot and mouth disease, brucellosis and tuberculosis, (2) ensuring that any commercial feed used is of good quality and free of contamination with toxins and infectious agents and (3) managing veterinary drugs responsibly. Although not an SPS requirement, animal welfare is increasingly a consumer requirement in the higher value markets, and producers should be aware of this.

One of COMESA's aims is to improve rural income by enabling pastoralists and small-scale livestock producers to earn more from their animals through better market access by participation in the Green Pass system. Their production is often, although not inevitably, characterised by low productivity. Particularly in smallholder and peri-urban enterprises the animals may not be of the necessary quality to supply meat to the formal market, let alone the export market.

The problem is compounded by lack of infrastructure and lack of access to resources such as production and market know-how, credit and even affordable veterinary services. One option is evidently to have a scheme whereby weaners are purchased from poor farmers and raised in feedlots where the necessary resources are available. Unfortunately such schemes can cause great dissatisfaction on the part of the people who sell weaners because the price that they receive seems very low in comparison to the price received by the feedlot owners. This will need a sensitive approach and possibly initiatives like weaner producers becoming shareholders in the feedlot, rather than simply being paid for the calves. Like commercial herds, testing will be needed to confirm freedom from particular diseases, and training in health management and responsible use of veterinary drugs may be required. Genetic improvement may also be needed through provision of AI or bulls in order to attain the necessary quality of meat.

Livestock commodity processors

The processors of livestock commodities range from providers of abattoir services to those who undertake further processing to add value to the final product that is offered for sale. They have a strong influence on the safety and quality of food derived from animals. Ante- and post mortal inspection by qualified personnel at the abattoir will ensure that the meat has been derived from a healthy animal. However, since meat is

highly perishable, particular care must be taken in the value-adding process to ensure that contamination with unwanted substances and agents does not render the product unsafe or unfit for human consumption. This is generally assured by implementation of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) throughout the processing, packaging and storage of the commodity. Certification for the Green Pass can only be issued when auditing has confirmed that the system has been adequately applied and the product has tested safe.

Animal feed manufacturers

The emergence of mad cow disease (BSE) dramatically focused attention on animal feed, believed to be the source of the problem. However, other health concerns have been raised about animal feed. Bacteria that cause salmonellosis, listeriosis and clostridial diseases in humans and animals have been traced to animal feed, and there have also in recent years been cases of very large amounts of meat having to be destroyed because it contained toxins like the carcinogen dioxin as a result of the animal feed being contaminated. SPS measures therefore have to be applied by animal feed manufacturers to ensure a safe product free of contaminants to safeguard human and animal health.

Wholesale/retail traders

COMESA wholesale/retail traders are the final link in the value chain before the commodity or product reaches the importer. It is in their own interest to handle the commodity or product bearing the Green Pass mark in such a way that there is no deterioration. When the Green Pass system is working as intended, selling the commodities or products bearing the proud symbol should confer a competitive advantage that will be jealously guarded and not jeopardised by allowing any deterioration of quality prior to export.

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Further information

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